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ABSTRACT

While professional organizations are traditionally low-budget operations, the advent of the World Wide Web has made many ideas of bringing service organizations and new disciplines into the U.S. mainstream feasible. This article focuses specifically on the cyberspace expansion of the counseling profession. Because counseling lends itself to cyber applications, some of these ideas may be translated to other helping professions interested in cyberspace expansion. As professionals with global expertise, there are two mandates: (1) instructing members of the profession with strategies for finding regulations and proper credentials in foreign countries; and (2) knowing whom to turn to as foreign counterparts. As the global community develops and educational needs expand, the electronic community will be a key portal for globalization of all professions. (ADT)

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by

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September 2001

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For most Americans, the globalization of a profession is equated with expansion of that profession into the international marketplace. For a variety of reasons, the United State's longitudinally strong economic status has led to a trade imbalance of more imports than exports, so therefore, we may logically assume the globalization of professions may result in a similar deficit, making the United States a marketplace for offshore credentialing.

While professional organizations are traditionally low-budget operations, the advent of the World Wide Web has made feasible some of the following ideas about how to bring service organizations and new disciplines into the U.S. mainstream. This article will focus on the profession of counseling; there is little reason to believe the ideas contained within will not apply to other professional disciplines. Also, because counseling lends itself, for better or for worse, to cyber applications, perhaps some of these ideas will be translated to other helping professions interested in cyberspace expansion.

However, before introducing these ideas, it would be useful to introduce what may be an unique idea to our readers: While Americans certainly play a role in taking professions abroad, historically, Americans have not excelled in globalizing professions. The historical reasons for this are numerous. For example, we are often used to being the experts, which makes it hard to be the student, giving us a reputation for one-sided thinking. Also, most of the time we have "exported expertise" it has been a reaction to conflict or war, meaning we have been asked for help rather than volunteering to enter into a mutually beneficial partnership. Sometimes other countries were concerned about U.S. imperialism and suspicious of importing U.S. expertise, which gave other countries an advantage in a globalization of markets. Additionally, our weakness at language, competitive rather than cooperative universities, and our 40-year booming economy made us less likely to enter the world market.

Advances in worldwide communication (email, Internet, satellite communication) have significantly eroded these historical barriers to globalization of professions. Now is the time for offshore professions to come to the U.S. with aspirations of introducing their style of education, professional practice, professional societies, and regulatory practices. Americans are intrigued with foreigners and foreign language/culture, and while the U.S. may be resisted elsewhere, importation of professional societies and its trappings to the U.S. usually does not meet with resistance from already established professional groups. The Internet, satellites and travel make it easy to avoid regulation, education is available for export to the U.S., and foreign degrees are recognized and often sought.

Other reasons for globalization of professions abound. In the U.S., we have 23,000 associations and room for more. Foreign professional associations could be a niche market for association management companies based in the U.S., as many credentials are being created globally with a small-to-large market here in the U.S. The American economy has two waves of professionals: Baby Boomers and Generation Xer's, both of which are susceptible/receptive to new ideas. Also, foreign contact raises the chance of foreign travel/living, both of which are seen as desirable to an increasingly mobile population. Finally, foreign associations may be seen as a way to explore the world in the safety of like-minded professionals.

While many professional certifying agencies are considering global expansion, few have viable plans for how to accomplish this expansion. Therefore, one may conclude that the world need not prepare itself for an onslaught of U.S. professional expansion.

Articulation of degrees is and has been a major obstacle in cross-cultural education. Merely working in the U.S. environment does not prepare us for "translating" what we do and how we are trained, as evidenced by the difficulty some foreign professionals have in understanding the myriad of terms we employ in the U.S. to describe our expertise in a particular area. Such terms as certification, credential, accreditation, licensure, registry, federal, and national abound. Additionally, U.S. companies often have difficulty in understanding the potpourri of foreign educational degrees, diplomas, and credentials.

As professionals with global expertise, we have two mandates: Instructing our members of professions with strategies for finding regulations and proper credentials in foreign countries—and, in the same view—knowing who we, as professionals, should turn to as foreign counterparts. For example, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the embassies and consulates of most nations, and international corporations can all be helpful sources of information on instructing foreign applicants in how to translate their portfolios into meaningful host-style applications.

Knowledge is the most flexible commodity to transfer globally. While a hundred years ago professional conferences were necessary for information exchange, the instant exchange of information offered by modern communication has done away with the need for such meetings. Global transfer of information is now possible

with the click of a button or mouse, if you prefer. It is important to note that one possible ramification of such ready access information dissemination is the elimination of service providers such as hospitals and architecture firms. This may place more professionals in the position to direct market their services.

The immigration and emigration of professionals, increase in global product trade, and the opening of previously closed markets (Korea, China, and South America) confirms that the world truly is becoming a global community. As this community develops and educational needs expand, it is likely current models will predominate. However, as use of the Internet and World Wide Web continue to expand, surely the electronic community will be a key portal for globalization of all professions.

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